A Seasonable and Necessary

ADMONITION

TO THE

Gentlemen

OF THE

FIRST SOCIETY,

FOR

REFORMATION of MANNERS.

Concerning Reformation of Themselves, of the Bishops, and of the House of Commons.

Gentlemen,

THO' I am a Stranger to many of you, and come not to your Meetings, yet am I a Sincere Well-wisher to the Work you are ingaged in, and to your selves for it: And tho' I was soon call'd away, for a better Service, I hope (as good as that is) and such as may Crown it at last with a Heavenly Blessing; yet have I never ceased, as occasion was offered, to contribute what I could to promote it. And for that purpose do I now write this. I chanced lately to look into a Book, wherein I observed that you had not only increased your *Numbers*, but also inlarged your *Stile* and *Title*, and made it more Comprehensive; not only for *Execution of Laws*, and *Suppression of Vice*, but for *Reformation of Manners*, and a *National Reformation*. Which I do not dislike provided you *make good the Undertaking*. For *Suppression of Vice* is but like Weeding the Ground. But *Reformation of Manners* require the Planting of Virtue. And this

this I hope you will be careful to do first at home amongst your selves, and especially in your peculiar Engagment, and make your *Real Virtue Exemplary* to the Nation, by a true Magnanimity, worthy of *Englishmen*, worthy of *Gentlemen*, worthy of *Christians*. Nothing under God doth more animate to true and Heroic Vertue, than such Examples. But if when occasions require *Generous Actions*, you think to cover *Laziness and Timidity* with *Prudential Excuses*; and in Printed Books with *Pompous Recommendations*, *Magnify Bugbears* to represent as Couragious those, who did not fly, tho' they did not dare to assault the Monster, or Second those that did, as if the Design was to cheat an Impudent vicious Generation into a Reformation, as Mothers sometimes fright their Children; or to seek for the *Applause* of real Virtue by such Actions, as have little of true Virtue in them: This would be rather to animate Vice, when the Trick is understood, and to *corrupt your selves with Vanity*, than to reform the Nation. And if such a Man as St. *Paul* was careful least while he Preach'd to others himself should become a Castaway, you cannot think such a Caution and *Admonition* impertinent or needless. And that you may see by proper Experiment that it is not, I shall acquaint you with that, which, tho' some of you know very well, I presume most do not, notwithstanding your Printed Account of the Societies, *&c.* [by those, who knew it very well.]

This work was in a hopeful way long since, to have made a greater Progress throughout the whole Nation, long before this than it hath yet done at this Day, had not the Wickedness of some Corrupt Judges checkt it, and the *Treacherous Prudentials* of some pretending Zeal or Good Will to it, neglected that Opportunity, which an Honest Prosecution might have turn'd to its much *Greater Advancement*. While the late Queen was living, certain Gentlemen of the Society were question'd for Writing a Book, intituled, *The Beginning and Progress of a Needful and Hopeful Reformation*; and for what they had done in that good Work, before the then Lords Commissioners of the Great Seal, whereof two were *Members* of the House of Commons, and one of them *Speaker*. Whereupon the Author of the Book presently sent them a Letter that he wrote it, and would be ready to answer for it when they pleased. So that when they appeared, they were discharged of that, but question'd for the rest, and, tho' in the Presence of no less than *Seven of*

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the *Reverend Bishops*, who came on purpose, so ill treated by the two Commissioners *Members of Parliament*, as was thought good Cause by the Author of the said Book to *Petition* the House against them, *for Discouraging the Execution of the Laws, and Contempt of her Majesties Authority*. And having drawn a *Petition*, advised with Counsel upon the Matter of Law, and with divers of those Bishops, and other Persons of Quality, who were present at the Hearing, concerning the Matter of Fact, he put it into the Hand of a Member, whom he knew obliged to present it: which after many Put-offs, was at last done, but so timed, that there were then but few Members in the House, and those such as Voted it should not be read: Which was another Fault not less than the Former, being a *Denial*, without any Colour of Cause, *of a Fundamental Right of all the Commons of England*. For this he first complained at the next Publick Sessions of the County, for which that Member serv'd; and soon after, at the next Sessions at the *Old Baily*, laid the whole Cause before the Judges, and the Lord Major and Aldermen, as chief of two of the most considerable Bodies of the Commons of *England*: And the Papers were left in the hand of Sir *Richard Levet*, then Sheriff, and now Lord Major of the City of *London*.

In this Case you may *observe*, first how great an Opportunity and Advantage was neglected, in not prosecuting two such Great Crimes so testified by such and so many Witnesses, and what good Effect that must have had throughout the whole Nation, for the Promotion of that Good Work? And secondly, What ill Effect it had, by discouraging such as were well affected, and animating such as were ill affected to it? And thirdly, I need not tell you who were, and who were most, faulty in this Case; Certainly they, who were most obliged, whether by special Engagement, or by their own Calling or Profession, and had most advantage for it, and yet neglected it. Nor will I interpose my Opinion, what farther use you are to make of it; but leave that to your own Consideration and Virtue. You must look to your own Obligations. It is not a light matter to engage in the Service of God. When you are in, you must go on without fearing the Faces of Men, and have a care you do not the Work of God negligently. If you look at a *National Reformation*, you must look farther and deeper than that *Superficial Reformation*, of Suppressing Vice by Execution of Human Laws, tho' that be a commendable Undertaking. If you will go

no farther than that, you must not arrogate to your selves the Honour of that, which belongs not to you, and is out of your Province. But as you are *Gentlemen*, and profess your selves *Christians*, I must hope you will shew your selves such, make good your Word and Engagement so publickly declar'd, and know and follow your Leader. It was I, (so Providence order'd it) who, after I had my *Quietus* from another Service, began your Society, and made Choice of the First Persons; publickly asserted their Cause, and defended their Actions, when they were first questioned; and had they followed me, had brought it, by the Blessing of God, to a farther Progress than yet hath been made. But when I saw some, whom I had introduced, set up with Formality, Affectation and Vanity, (tho' for all these Infirmities they might be useful, yet) in so serious a Work I could not bear it. But the All-wise Providence made use of that to take me off, when it was begun and setled, for a better Service. And to that upon perusal of the *Title and Approbation* of your Book I now Invite you. You are ingaged, and cannot go back: That would be not only your Shame, but Sin against your own Souls. Either follow, or join with me, or shew me some Reasons to the contrary; or go on your selves without me, so you do but do it effectually, and make good your Undertakings.

The *Necessity of a more effectual Reformation* appears in your own Book, and what Order amongst us it is, that should need it least, but does need it most, as one of them has ingeniously confess'd. How else comes it to pass, that if the Work be so good, of five and twenty Reverend Bishops, you could prevail but with five to approve it? and those none of the Greatest or Neatest, but of the Meanest and Remotest; You must go to *Bath*, to *Bristol*, to *Glocester*, to *Wales* and *Chester*, for Approbations, and amongst those to such as notoriously need Reformation themselves, for taking and holding Charges, and of the highest Nature, the Care of Souls, so inconsistent. And if such Men as they be guilty of such Faults, What a *Reformation* is that which brings forth such Fruits! Certainly it self stands in great need of *Reformation*; and to the very bottom: Their very Principles are faulty. To shew and demonstrate this, I have begun, *&c.*

This was dated *Nov.* 4. 1699. and sent to your Meeting in *Threadneedle-Street*, but soon came into the Hands of one concerned to conceal

conceil it. What followed is only concerning ſome Papers left in the Hand of Mr. *Ra. Hartley*, who might properly be call'd the Seniour of your Society, was the firſt Actor in Commiſſion of the Peace in it, the firſt and greateſt Sufferer of it, and even from ſuch as ought to have treated him otherwiſe; and has deſerved as well in the Service as any Man in it. The Papers were what was begun for a more Fundamental Reformation, and have been much inlarged ſince; ſo that what is there ſaid, is needleſs now to be repeated. But this is now Publiſhed upon this ſpecial Occaſion: It relates what did concern the Beginners of your Society and the Seven Biſhops, and doth now concern your whole Society, and the whole Order of Biſhops, to redeem the Opportunity, which was then inexcuſably neglected.

There hath ſince that Letter been *another ſuch Opportunity neglected*, if there was any Member of your Society in the laſt Houſe of Commons, as you know there was; and I know there was thoſe, who knew what was written to Sir *R. C.* to be true. And where was your Zeal for Reformation, that none of you all ſhewed more concern in ſuch a Caſe as that? But it is now again revived by a late Printed Paper concerning the *Corruption and Impiety of the Late Houſe of Commons*, if it be not alſo prudentially neglected. Here you have an Opportunity to demonſtrate *the Reality of your Zeal* for the Honour of God, and of your Concern for the Service of your Country. And you are like to have one, who was one of the firſt, and principal Actors next Mr. *Hartley*, of the Society, a Member of the next Parliament, and to ſerve for the ſame County, for which he ſerved, who was concern'd in that Violation of that Fundamental Right of all the Commons of *England*, and for which two of the Principal Criminals concern'd in that Charge of Impiety, did ſerve the laſt and precedent Parliament. So that it is hard to ſay, how a Man can have more ſpecial Obligations upon him for any Service, beſides thoſe General Obligations of Profeſſion of Religion, Love of his Country, and the Truſt repoſed in him.

But tho' he be ſo ſpecially obliged, yet I conceive *the whole Society concern'd*; and 'tis very likely divers Members of it more ſpecially by former neglect of Duty. Now is the time to appear in this Cauſe, and ſhew your ſelves Men and Chriſtians. If you, who make ſuch Pretences for a National Reformation, ſhew your ſelves *Triflers* with God and Man upon another ſuch

Occaſion,

Occaſion, what can you expect but that God and Man ſhould ſpew you out of the Nation. I ſee ſome of you, who ſet up for the Glory of Reforming others, ſo far from Reforming themſelves, that they are rather ſunk deeper into that empty Formality, Affectation and Vanity, which I could not indure in ſo ſerious a Work at the firſt, have often reproved in private, and, ſince that could not prevail, think neceſſary to be a little check'd by a more publick Admonition: but in hope of Amendment upon this, ſhall ſay no more at this time. I wiſh you all well, and ſhould be ready to ſerve you all, or any of you in the Work you are ingaged in, if there be occaſion.

It is a Work, which requires very ſerious Application, and Good Reſolution. *The Root of all our Unhappineſs*, which moſt needs a Reformation is in the Parliament, and eſpecially in the Spiritual Lords, as they are commonly call'd, and the Houſe of Commons. I muſt be bold to ſay, I know not a more *Inſignificant Body of Men* upon the face of the Earth than the preſent Biſhops: Nor have they ever been much better ſince they were cow'd and diſpirited by that *Beaſt*, Hen. 8th, and Corrupted with Treacherous Principles by his *Falſe Prophet*, *Cranmer*. Nor can I expect ever to ſee things better till the *Cranmarian Spirit*, and that *Curſed thing* then introduced be caſt out of the Nation. It will, I verily believe, prove a continual Curſe both to Church and State to the Deſtruction of both, if it be not ſpeedily caſt out, but longer foſtred by ſuch Biſhops. And tho' *the inferior Clergy* make ſome Oppoſition, it ſeems to me but trifling and ſcandalous, by ſo much inſiſting upon *Human Principles*, as if there were no better to determine the Caſe effectually; or they did not dare to aſſert them. Such is their worldly Wiſdom. Had we Biſhops of true Chriſtian Spirits, we ſhould need no Societies for Reformation of Manners among the Laity. But God hath raiſed up all the Societies, and permitted the Sects to expoſe the Unworthineſs of ſuch a Body of Biſhops. Nor can we expect better than a continual Succeſſion of Temporizing Flatterers of Princes, till what I have ſaid be done. Perhaps ſome *Grub-ſtreet Scribler* to get a Penny, may call this *Saucineſs*, and their Lordſhips, if they have no more Religion, be offended at it. But I muſt let them know, I write it purely out of Fidelity to God, and Fidelity to my Country. They know who I am, and that I am ready to demonſtrate what I ſay at any time. Let them mend their Manners,

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be more faithful and ſerviceable to God and to their Country, and they will ſoon find I know how to imploy my ſelf better, than to find Faults, when there is no Neceſſity for it.

And for the *Houſe of Commons*, I muſt declare I know no greater *Danger* both to *Religion* and to the *Government*, than from them; unleſs their *Principals*, for whom they ſerve will make them more ſenſible of their Duty; make them know they are not their Maſters but their Servants, by giving them Inſtructions, and inquiring into their Behaviour in the Houſe, and vindicate that great and neceſſary fundamental Right of every Commoner of *England*, to have their Petitions for juſt and proper Matters, duly and decenrly anſwer'd, without either rejecting their Petitions without reading, or diſcouraging them by Dommereing Commitments. And this is a matter your Society is ſpecially obliged to promote at this time in good earneſt. It is true, all the Commons of *England* are concern'd in it in general, but you more eſpecially, who are concern'd for your ſelves immediately, and upon that occaſion for the Service of your Country. How ſilly a thing was it to tell the World in your Book, that the *Biſhop of Glouceſter* has been a great Encourager of your Undertaking, and writ a Vindication of it, when he was one of the Seven, who were preſent at the Hearing, and he who ſcribled that part of your Book, one of thoſe, who were queſtion'd, and yet neither they nor any of the reſt, have to this Day ever farther appeared in that Matter; and *the Vindication* was but built upon the Foundation of the Book before-mentioned, of the Beginning and Progreſs of the Reformation, and a little trick of ſome to ingroſs the Honour of this Work to themſelves; which they ſhould ſtill have injoyed, had they but better deſerved it: and yet I will not deny them the juſt Commendations of what they have done; for it is a good Work, and deſerves Encouragement.

But in the Houſe of Commons there is one great *Decay of our Government*, which is commonly taken notice of, but no care taken for the *Repair*. Many *Antient Corporations*, which were conſiderable heretofore, are in proceſs of time reduced to ſuch a Paucity of inconſiderable Electors, and thoſe ſo ſubject to ſome particular Perſons, that they have in Truth and Reality no Choice at all, (no more than our Dean and Chapters) ſo that it may well be queſtioned, if the Principles of the true *Engliſh* Government, which was founded upon true Principles of Wiſdom, Juſtice and Equity, be well conſider'd, whether Writs

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ought to be ſent to ſuch Burroughs, and the Perſons returned by them be admited to ſit in Parliament. Beſides theſe there are divers other inconſiderable Burroughs, who have ſhewed themſelves ſo baſe and mercenary in their Elections, that they have long ſince juſtly forfeited their Right of Elections, if it were looked into; So that it may be conſidered, *Whether it be not an Abuſe of the Government, and an Injury to all the Counties, Citys and Conſiderable Burroughs, that Writs are ſtill ſent out to them?*

Theſe are things fit to be conſider'd by ſuch as pretend to attempt a National Reformation: For unleſs this Root be reformed, all other Attempts are but playing with a vain Pretence of Reformation, which is more like to render your ſelves and the Nation ridiculous at laſt, than to produce any ſolid and laſting Fruits. I do not write this to diſcourage your Proceedings, but to make you ſenſible of what you have of your ſelves undertaken, and to excite you to ſhew your ſelves Men, and perform your Engagements. Nor do I call you to any thing impracticable, or more than to do what you can. You are like to have ſome Members in the Houſe: You may all conſult out of the Houſe what is fit to be done by them in it: and thoſe who are not Members to act there, may do good Service by acting as Solliciters without. Do but honeſtly what you can, and I have no more to ſay. But I muſt tell you, What is the Right and Duty of every Commoner of *England*, upon any ſpecial Occaſion, is much more the Right and Duty of ſo many engaged in a Society for ſuch a Reformation. Any one of you may Petition the Houſe, and you may injoin any one of your own Members, who is of the Houſe, to preſent it. And you have this Encouragement that none can oppoſe it, but he will eaſily be diſcover'd to be no true Friend to his Country, but a Man of Deſign and Intereſt, and unworthy of a place in ſuch an Aſſembly. And beſides this, if the Number of ſuch Perſons in the Houſe be too great to obtain ſo neceſſary a Preparation, I ſee no reaſon why the King, with the Advice of the Judges and Privy Council, ſhould not diſſolve them, and ſummon another Parliament without any Writ to ſuch Corporations. Nor do I know any more juſt and reaſonable matter for all the Counties, Cities, and moſt conſiderable Burroughs, to Addreſs to His Majeſty for, than this; and few things more Honourable for His Reign.

Beſides the Juſtice of this, it is greatly neceſſary to prevent divers Miſchiefs and Inconveniencies to the Nation, both from Forreigners, and from Parties and Factions at home, and particularly that pernicious one of Republican Deiſts and Latitudinarians, ſo dangerous, no leſs to Religion, than to the Government.

Other things there are very pertinent for your Conſideration. But I ſhall not trouble you with more, till I underſtand what uſe is made of this: Which, tho' in print, I intend only for the uſe of your ſelves and ſome few others.

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Your Faithful Friend
and Humble Servant.

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